

REMARKS

Applicants thank the Examiner for allowing claim 17 again and indicating allowable subject matter. Applicants have amended claim 3 and 18 to improve English usage without changing claim scope and added new claim 19 based on the disclosure, for example, at page 7, lines 4-10, of the specification. Claim 7 has been amended to correct its dependency. New claim 20 has been added, based on the disclosure, for example, in FIG. 6 of the application.

Claims 3, 10 and 18 have been rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,994,204 (Young) in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,719,085 (Moon). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Claim 3 prior to this Amendment recited the step of bonding a supporting member to a first surface of a semiconductor wafer on which a semiconductor element is formed. The specification explains at page 5, lines 7-21, that wirings and semiconductor circuits are formed prior to the bonding of the supporting member. Furthermore, persons of ordinary skill in the art would have understood that semiconductor device elements, such as wirings and circuits, must be formed prior to the bonding of the supporting member, because semiconductor processing cannot be performed to the semiconductor wafer once the first surface of the wafer is covered by the supporting member.

Thus, claim 3 prior to this Amendment required that a semiconductor device element be formed prior to the bonding. For the Examiner to understand this point but not to change claim scope, applicants have amended claim 3 to say that a supporting member is bonded to the first surface of the semiconductor wafer on which the semiconductor device element has been formed. In addition, claim 3 has been amended to recite the step of providing a semiconductor wafer on which the semiconductor device element has been formed, which is inherent in the language of claim 3 prior to this Amendment.

The Examiner contends that Young's glass wafer 312 corresponds to the claimed supporting member, Young's silicon wafer 302 corresponds to the claimed semiconductor wafer, and the attaching of the glass wafer 312 to the silicon wafer 302 shown in Young's FIG. 3A to

the claimed bonding. However, when Young' glass wafer 312 is attached to the silicon wafer 302, no semiconductor device element has been formed on Young's silicon wafer 302, contrary to the claim language. In fact, Young's semiconductor device elements are formed, after the attaching, in the process step shown in Young's FIG. 3F. See column 4, lines 8-24, of Young. Young's semiconductor device elements must be formed after the attaching of the glass wafer 312 to the silicon wafer 302, because Young's attaching is performed at 800-1000°C for 2-6 hours. See column 3, lines 24-42, of Young. Persons of ordinary skill in the art would have understood that semiconductor device elements would not survive such a heat treatment.

Moon does not cure the deficiency of Young. Claim 18 recites the same bonding step as claim 3. The rejection of claims 3, 10 and 18 under 35 USC 103(a) over Young and Moon should be withdrawn because they do not teach or suggest the limitation that a supporting member is bonded to the first surface of the semiconductor wafer on which a semiconductor device element has been formed.

New claim 19 states that the second etching comprises wet-etching part of a semiconductor portion of the semiconductor wafer. Applicants note that Moon's etching shown in FIGS. 3D and 3E relied upon by the Examiner etches trench oxide 316 formed on silicon substrate 300 and not the silicon substrate 300 itself, contrary to the claim language.

In light of the above, a Notice of Allowance is solicited.

In the event that the transmittal letter is separated from this document and the Patent and Trademark Office determines that an extension and/or other relief is required, applicants petition for any required relief including extensions of time and authorize the Commissioner to charge

the cost of such petitions and/or other fees due in connection with the filing of this document to
Deposit Account No. 03-1952, referencing Docket No. **606402016900**.

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